

Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force

Final Report and Recommendations

May 26, 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2014, Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools, created the Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force—a group of business, school, community and faith-based stakeholders—to recommend strategies to address disproportions in academic achievement and discipline outcomes in the Knox County Schools that might be correlated with income, race, language, and/or disability.

The Disparities in Educational Outcomes (DEO) Task Force began their work in March 2015. Initial meetings focused on a review of the work since the 2007 Report, data related to district demographics, discipline and academic achievement outcomes, district policies and procedures governing the discipline process, and law enforcement reports. Additionally, opportunities for stakeholder participation and input were provided through two Community Forums, and several educator forums. Stakeholder input was compiled and shared with the Task Force.

In addition to stakeholder feedback, input from other community outreach initiatives was reviewed and considered, specifically the work from the *Push Out/Teach-In* and Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero's *Save Our Sons* initiative. Perspectives and experiences from other communities engaged in this work were also gathered, specifically from Los Angeles, Calif. and Nashville, Tenn. Finally, research on the issue of disparities in educational outcomes and promising practices from the field were shared and discussed, including Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS), social-emotional learning, Restorative Justice/Practices, Cultural Competency, and alternatives to suspension.

Throughout the process, every effort was made to ensure transparency and allow for ongoing comment and community dialogue. Meeting agendas, meeting notes, and community feedback were posted publicly on the Knox County Schools website, along with an email link that provided opportunities for individual questions and input.

As a result of this intensive work, the Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force developed a set of four overarching goals:

1. Redesign KCS discipline policies and practices of the Knox County Schools to:
 - Eliminate systemic disparities in discipline based on race, ethnicity, income, language, disability, zip code, or other categories for potential discrimination;
 - Include and emphasize Restorative Practices/alternatives to suspension and expulsion;
 - Incorporate Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in every classroom/school; and
 - Cultivate a positive environment of mutual responsibility and self-advocacy.
2. Enhance capacity of educators to provide high quality instruction and respond to classroom behavioral challenges.
3. Utilize juvenile justice system only when necessary (criminal activity).
4. Ensure academic growth and achievement for all students, particularly for those furthest behind.

Additionally, the Task Force proposed set of recommendations that specifically address 1) training, 2) programs, 3) practices, and 4) personnel.

Finally, the Task Force recommends four key strategies to ensure effective implementation:

1. A clear implementation plan for individual strategies/action steps that include timelines, outcomes, and milestones and implement the plan as prescribed;
2. A Steering and Oversight Committee that consists of individuals representing all key stakeholder groups;
3. An Ombudsman role that reports directly to the superintendent; and
4. A comprehensive communication plan designed to share information, solicit meaningful input, and expand parent/community access to school information and services to non-English speakers.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

PURPOSE OF THE TASK FORCE

In November 2014, Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools, took steps to create the Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force—a group of business, school, community and faith-based stakeholders—to recommend strategies to address disproportions in academic achievement and discipline outcomes in the Knox County Schools that might be correlated with income, race, language, and/or disability.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

To ensure that a wide range of perspectives were reflected in the work of the Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force, members were selected to represent the variety of key school and community stakeholders. The Task Force members are listed below; Co-chairs are marked with an asterisk (*).

- The Honorable Charme Allen, Knox County District Attorney General
- Dr. Elizabeth Alves*, Knox County Schools
- Pastor Daryl Arnold, Overcoming Believers Church
- Ms. Tomma Battle, parent
- Dr. Susan Benner, University of Tennessee
- Mr. Adolphus Brown, Coldwell Banker
- Mr. Terry Brown, Knox County Juvenile Court
- Reverend Dr. John A. Butler, Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church
- Mr. Andre Canty, Highlander Research & Education Center
- Ms. Michelle Casini, Knox County Schools
- Ms. Ronni Chandler, Project GRAD
- Mr. Maurice Chunn, student
- Ms. Tanya Coats, Knox County Schools
- Dr. Clifford Davis, Knox County Schools
- Rabbi Alon Ferency, Heska Amuna Synagogue
- Ms. Rita Geier, retired attorney
- Dr. Coral Getino, parent
- Mr. Chad Hensley, Knox County Schools
- The Honorable Timothy Irwin, Knox County Juvenile Court
- Sheriff J.J. Jones, Knox County Sheriff's Office
- Mr. Kamau Kenyatta, Knox County Schools
- Mr. Nathan Langlois, Knox County Schools
- Mr. Sam Lee, Knox County General District Attorney
- Ms. Rosa Mar, Retired Community Volunteer
- Ms. Melissa Massie, Knox County Schools
- Ms. Alise Ndacayisaba, student
- Ms. Phyllis Nichols*, Knoxville Area Urban League
- Mr. Randy Nichols, Knox County Sheriff's Office
- Chief David Rausch, Knoxville Police Department
- Mayor Madeline Rogero, City of Knoxville
- Ms. Amber Rountree, Knox County Board of Education
- Mr. Mark Stephens, Knox County Public Defender's Office
- Mr. Thomas Strickland, City of Knoxville
- Dean Rosalyn Tillman, Pellissippi State Community College
- Ms. Cindy White, Knox County Schools
- Ms. Kim Wilburn-Cullom, Knox County Schools

THE PROCESS

The Disparities in Educational Outcomes (DEO) Task Force began their work in March 2015. Initial meetings focused on a review of the work since the 2007 Report, data related to discipline and academic achievement outcomes, and the district policies and procedures governing the discipline process in the Knox County Schools. During these meetings, Task Force members were able to analyze the data, ask questions, discuss challenges, and ultimately develop a common understanding of the issues related to disparities. This work continued into the fall, and conversations centered around four broad areas of potential recommendations: 1) training, 2) programs, 3) practices, and 4) personnel.

Concurrent with the formal work of the Task Force, members were encouraged to research the work of other communities involving this issue and share research and promising practices evolving from this work. Concepts such as Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS), social-emotional learning, Restorative Justice/Practices, promoting Cultural Competency, and alternatives to suspension were explored and discussed during Task Force meetings.

To better understand and learn from the experiences of other districts, several Task Force members spoke directly to former Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent John Deasy, and Chief Executive Officer of Student Services for Metro Nashville Public Schools Dr. Tony Majors, who collaborated in this work with the Annenberg Foundation as part of a large district consortium. Key takeaways from those discussions highlighted the importance of an inclusive community process, an assumption of goodwill among all parties, a focus on developing potential solutions to the issues, a commitment to continuous improvement, and a collective responsibility to ensure that the proposed recommendations are adopted and implemented.

In order to ensure that the full range of perspectives on this issue were heard and acknowledged, the Task Force held a series of forums. A small student forum in May 2015 provided an opportunity for the Task Force to hear directly from students in order to better understand their experience in the Knox County Schools and hear their thoughts about recommended action steps.

In the fall of 2015, a Principal Forum was held during a regularly scheduled Principals' Meeting. Discipline and academic data was presented and principals were given the opportunity to discuss the issues in small groups and provide individual comment. Notes from this session were compiled and provided to the Task Force for review and consideration.

A Community Forum was held on December 1, 2015 to engage a broader constituency and hear the full range of perspectives on these issues. Over 250 participants, including students, teachers, principals, parents, and community members attended this forum, and through facilitated small group sessions and comment cards, individual experiences, perspectives and recommendations were captured for review and consideration by the Task Force.

Two Teacher Forums were held in March 2016. These sessions were advertised and open to teachers across the Knox County Schools. Similar to the Principal Forum, discipline and academic data were presented with opportunities for discussion and individual comment. Notes from these sessions were compiled and shared with the Task Force.

In April 2016, assistant principals were given an opportunity to share their thoughts and insights during a regularly scheduled Assistant Principal Meeting. Given the fact that these individuals are the ones responsible for addressing disciplinary issues in the Knox County Schools, their perspectives offered additional insights on the issues. Again notes from these sessions were compiled and shared with the Task Force.

In addition to the feedback gathered by the Task Force, input from other community outreach initiatives was acknowledged and considered, specifically, the work from the *Push Out/Teach-In* and Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero's *Save Our Sons* initiative.

Throughout the process, every effort was made to ensure transparency and allow for ongoing comment and community dialogue. Meeting agendas, meeting notes, and community feedback were posted publicly on the Knox County Schools website. Additionally, an email link was established and moderated to provide opportunities for individual questions and additional input.

During the spring of 2016, Task Force members began crafting this report and a series of recommendations designed to address the issues related to disparities in educational outcomes. During its development and throughout the process, Task Force members engaged in robust dialogue and debate around the issues, the data, the desired outcomes, the recommendations, and the specific language included in the report. Several drafts were reviewed and refined prior to its presentation at a second Community Forum held in April 2016. During this community forum, the content of the report was shared with particular emphasis highlighting the connections between community feedback and Task Force recommendations. Opportunities for additional comment and discussion were again provided through facilitated small group sessions. Notes from this community forum were compiled and shared with the Task Force for final consideration.

This final report reflects the full consideration and general consensus of the DEO Task Force. This report will be submitted and publically presented to the Knox County Board of Education at the June 2016 board meeting.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND PARTICIPATION

From its inception, the DEO Task Force was highlighted as a key initiative in the Knox County Schools. During the 2015 State of the Schools Address, Dr. McIntyre identified the work of the Task Force as one of the seven community conversations designed to engage broad stakeholder input in addressing one of our "thorniest issues" and to help shape the future of public education in our community.

In order to ensure a variety of opportunities for interested individuals to engage in the work of the Task Force, a webpage (www.knoxschools.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=12284) was established to share information and to allow for community comment. Additionally, multiple opportunities for stakeholder input were provided through a variety of forums as noted above. Public forums, were broadly advertised and participation was strong. Stakeholder input was compiled and published on the website and considered in the development of the Task Force recommendations.

PROGRESS SINCE THE 2007 REPORT

In 2006, an effort to examine and address racial disparities was launched when the Knox County Board of Education asked then County Mayor Mike Ragsdale to appoint a community-based Task Force "to examine the issues of community concerns regarding higher suspension and expulsion rates of African American students, assess best practices in comparable systems, and make recommendations to the Board." One year later in March 2007, the Task Force presented its findings and recommendations to the Mayor (see Appendix 1). This occurred during a transition time in the Knox County Schools, prior to Dr. McIntyre's appointment as Superintendent. As a result, the recommendations lacked executive sponsorship and many

in the school community were completely unaware of the report and the expectations for change.

Several significant changes in discipline practices have followed in the years since the 2007 report:

1. A committee comprised of Central Office staff and principals developed a set of guidelines to govern disciplinary action and ensure consistency across schools. These guidelines were tailored for both middle and high school.
2. Alternative school opportunities were created and offered to all secondary students (grades 6-12) who received a long-term suspension or expulsion from school.
3. Transportation was provided for all middle schools students who were assigned to alternative school.
4. Although not systemic, several schools have engaged in cultural competency training for teachers and staff.
5. Character education was strongly encouraged in all schools through the Character Counts curriculum.

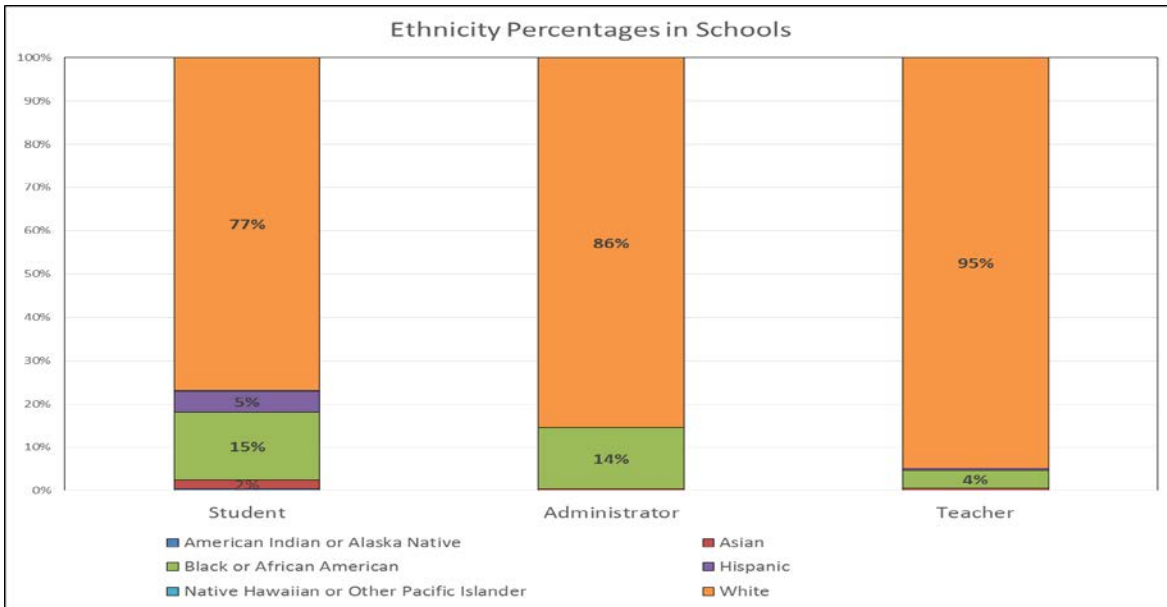
DATA ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

In order to fully understand the issue of disparities in discipline and academics in the Knox County Schools, the Task Force undertook a significant review of district and school data. (All data presentations are posted for public review on the district webpage.) The following is a summary of that information, as well as a statistical analysis conducted by the Knox County Schools Research, Evaluation and Accountability department.

DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

The information below is a summary of the demographic composition of the student population, administrative staff, and certified instructional staff in the Knox County Schools during the 2014-15 school year. The table below provides the count and percentage of students by race/ethnic subgroup and the graph that follows illustrates this information.

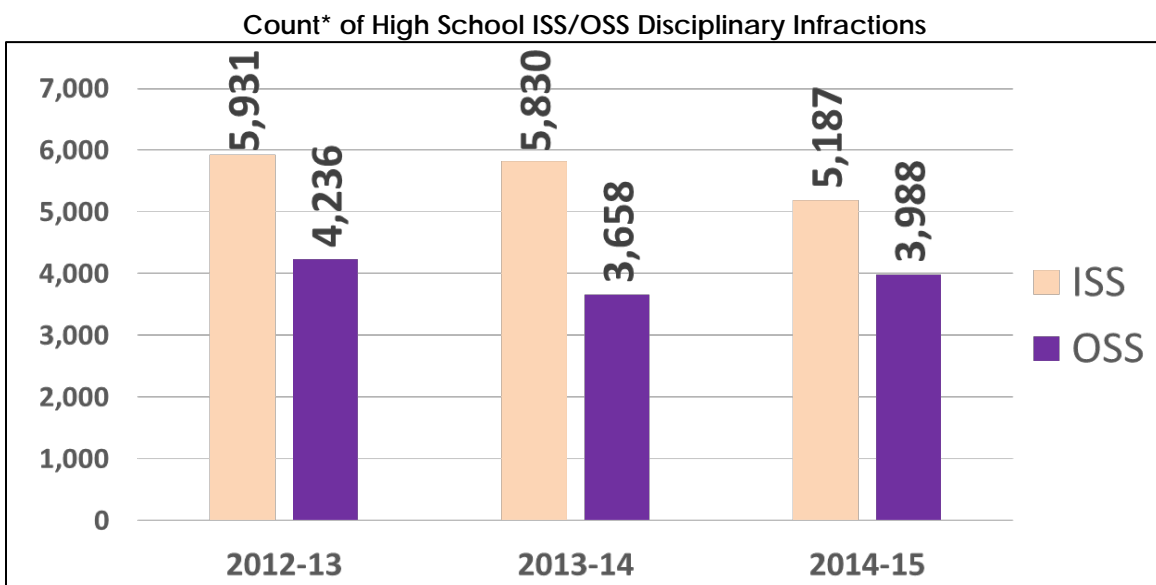
	Number			Percent		
	Student	Administrator	Teacher	Student	Administrator	Teacher
American Indian or Alaska Native	132	0	2	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	643	1	22	2.1%	0.4%	0.5%
Black or African American	4794	34	131	15.5%	14.0%	4.1%
Hispanic	1529	0	27	4.9%	0.0%	0.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	78	0	0	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
White	23795	207	4623	76.8%	85.5%	94.8%



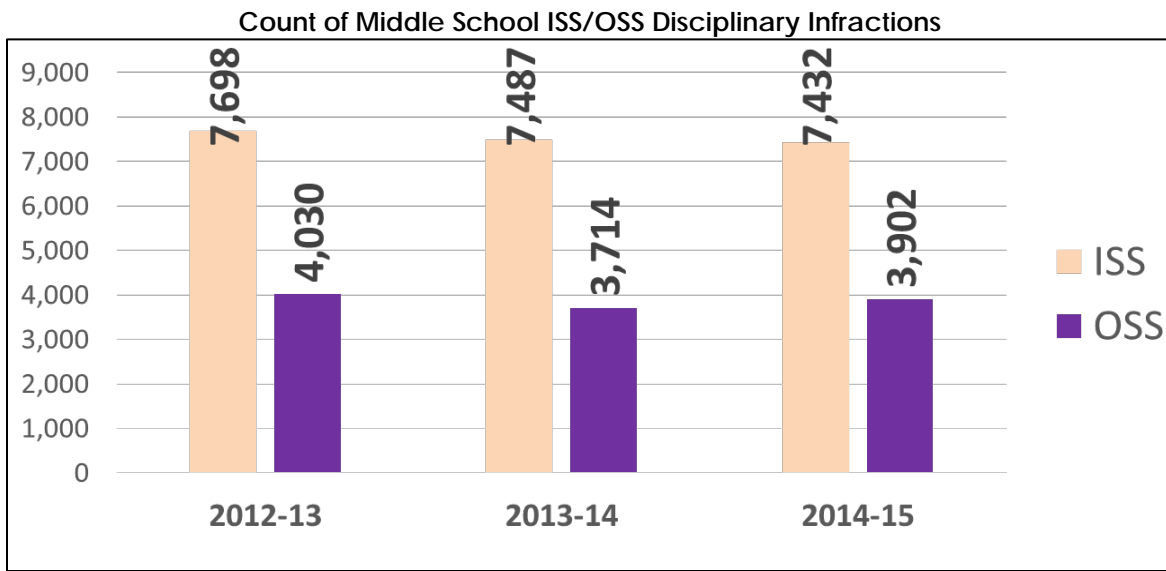
As noted in the table and graph above, the overall minority student population in the Knox County Schools is relatively small, with African-American and Latino students constituting 15.5% and 4.9% of the population, respectively. For the administrative and instructional staff demographics, these percentages are notably smaller, with only 5.2% of instructional staff and 14.5% of administrative staff classified as minorities.

DISTRICT DISCIPLINE DATA

Student discipline data were examined for the past three years. The graphs below represent a simple count of all disciplinary infractions that resulted in either in-school (ISS) or out-of-school (OSS) suspension.

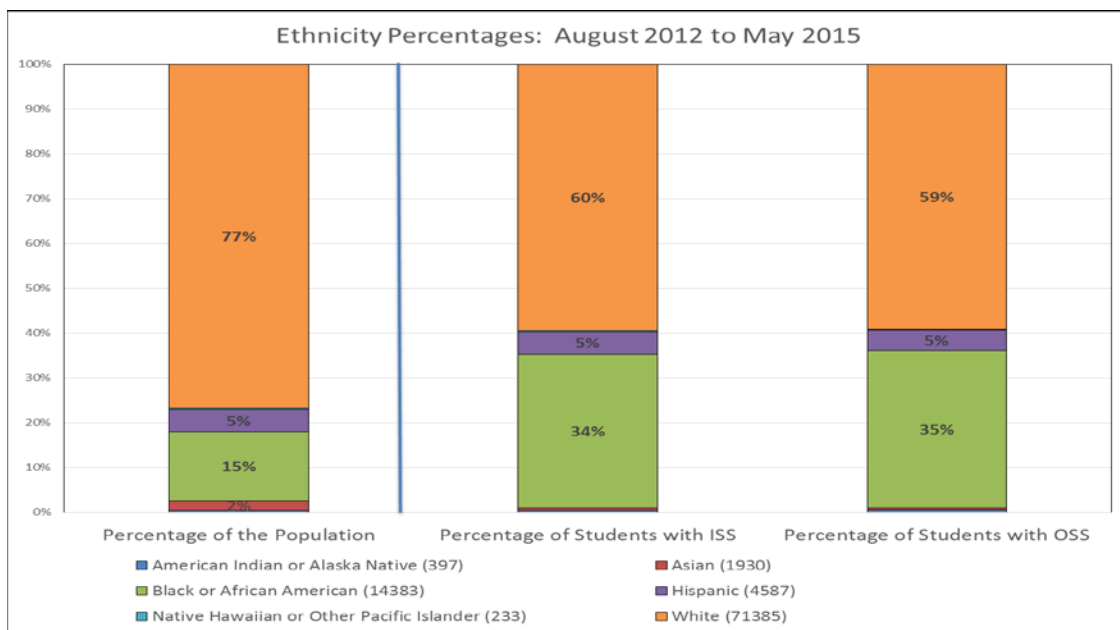


* An individual student may be represented multiple times in these data as this graph represents a count of infractions rather than a count of students.



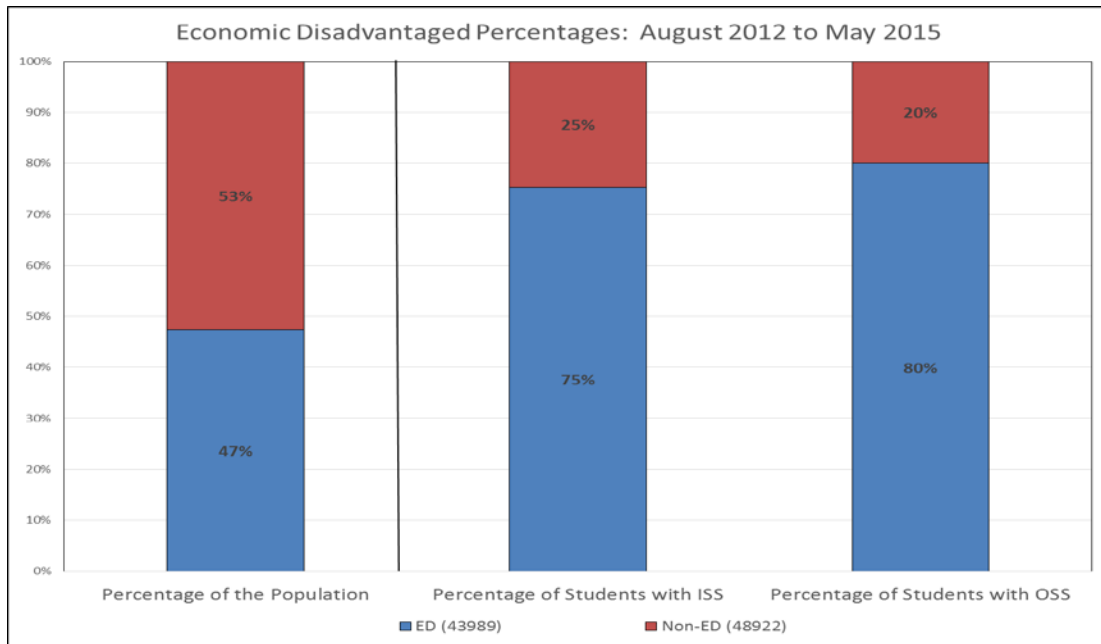
These graphs indicate some small fluctuations in numbers over the past three years, but generally reveal a consistent trend. A notable trend between the high school and middle school data is that while OSS are somewhat consistent between the grades, ISS seems to be more frequently used by middle schools.

To better understand who is being suspended from school, the data were analyzed by subgroups of students. The graph below compares the percent of students by subgroup who have received either ISS or OSS.



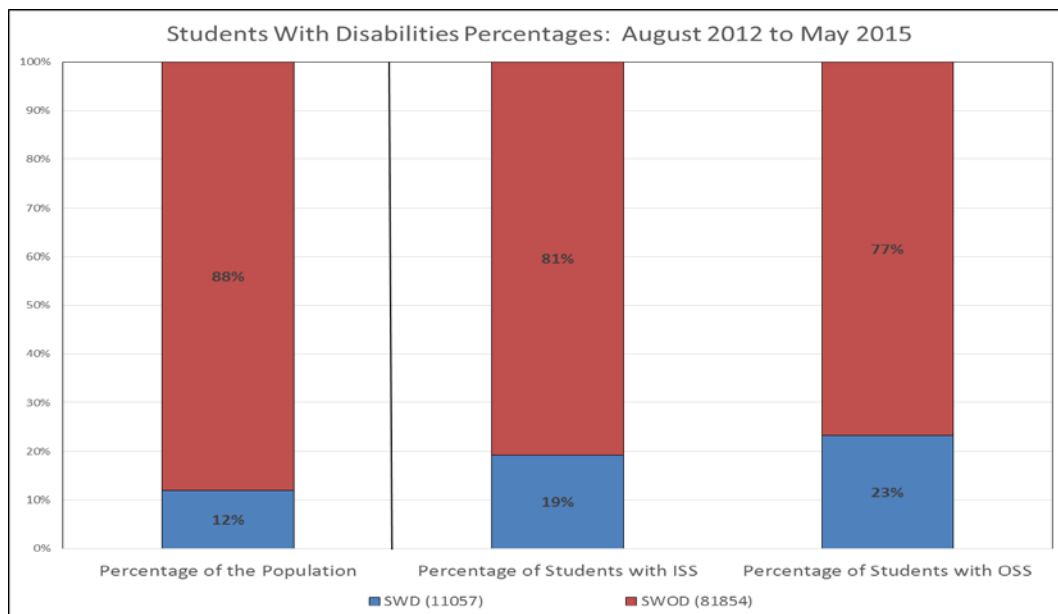
From this graph, it appears that based on the overall population percentages, white students are underrepresented and black students are overrepresented in discipline that results in suspension.

Another data perspective illustrates the impact of poverty on student discipline. The graph below shows the percent of economically disadvantaged (ED) students versus their non-economically disadvantaged peers compared to the percent of students in each group who have received ISS or OSS.



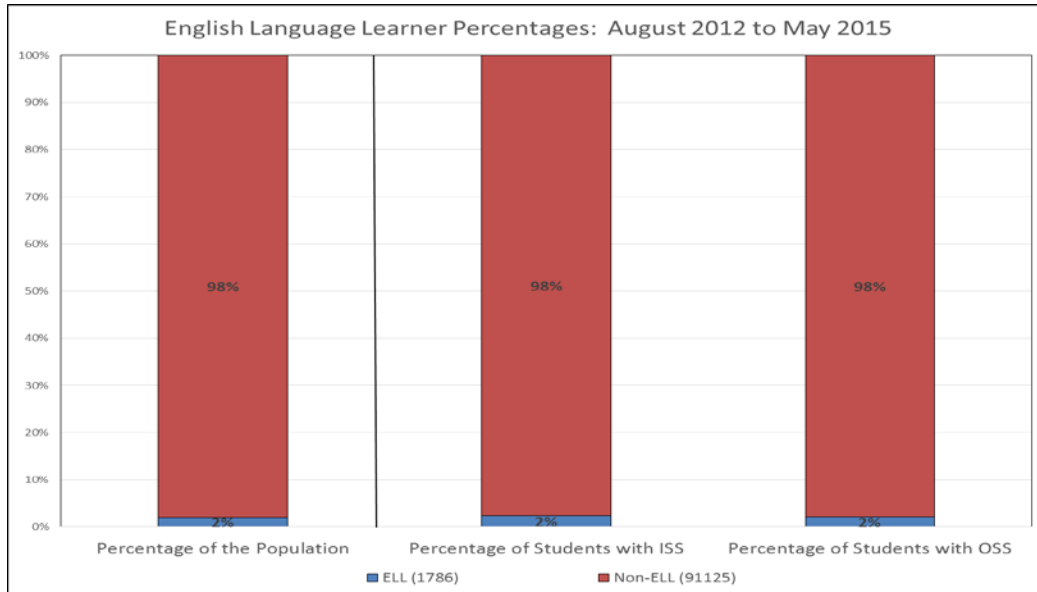
Again, these data suggest that the non-ED population appears to be underrepresented while the ED population appears to be overrepresented in disciplinary outcomes.

Students with disabilities (SWD) represent another subgroup of students that were examined in relation to students without disabilities (SWOD).

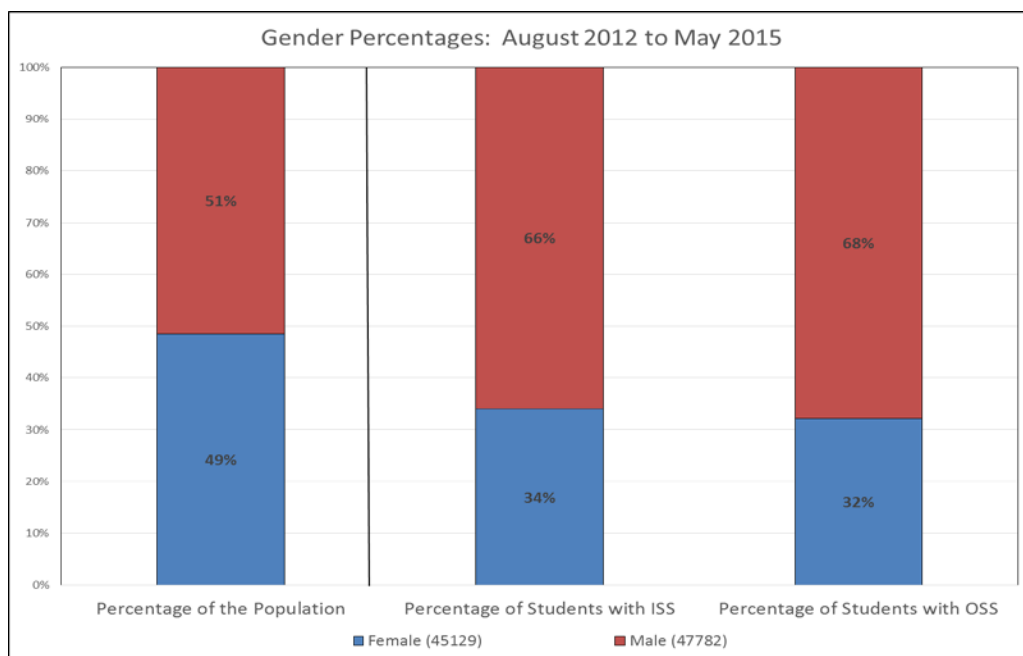


In a similar pattern, the SWOD population appears to be underrepresented while the SWD population appears to be overrepresented when suspensions is the punishment.

Although the English Language Learner (ELL) population is a relatively small subgroup in comparison to overall district demographics, this is the fastest growing group of students in the Knox County Schools. As seen in the graph below, there are no apparent disparities in disciplinary outcomes for this subgroup of students.

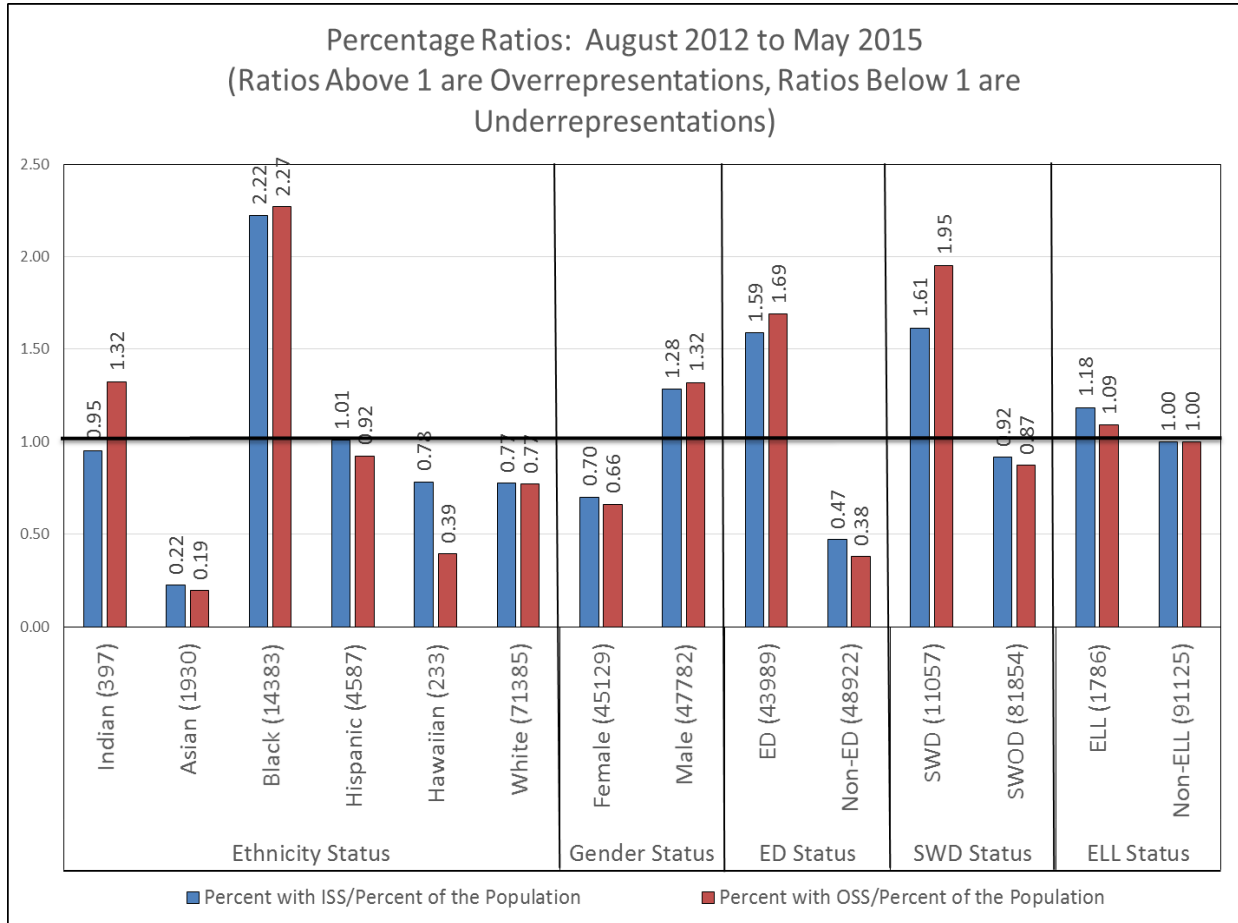


Finally, the impact of gender on discipline outcomes was examined. The graph below indicates that the female student population appears to be underrepresented while the male student population appears to be overrepresented.



STATISTICAL DATA

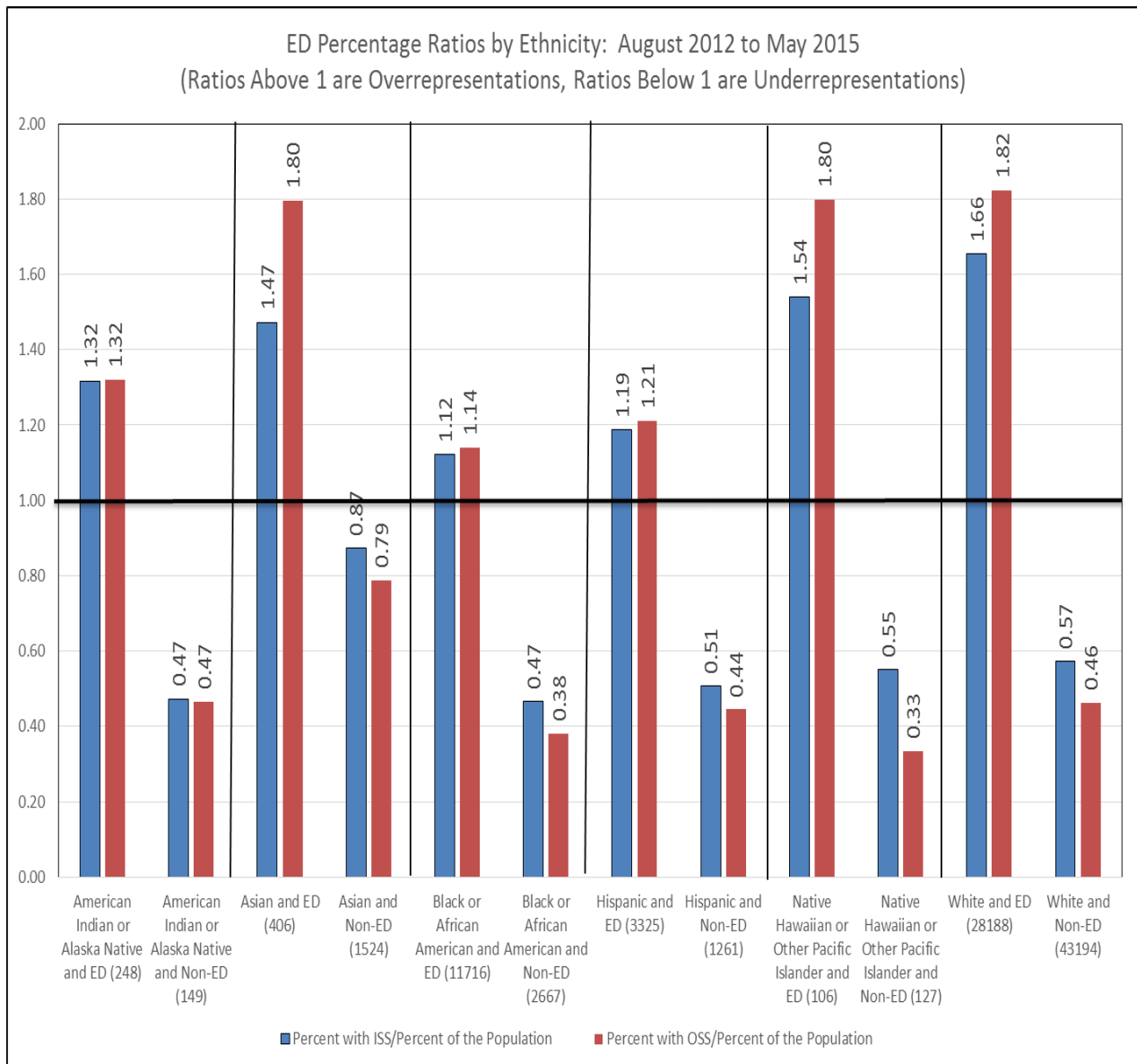
A deeper statistical analysis of the data provides a clearer, more holistic perspective of the discipline trends in the Knox County Schools. When the percentage of students receiving suspensions is divided by their population percentage, a ratio that reflects the extent to which the populations are overrepresented or underrepresented is created. A ratio of 1 indicates that the discipline percentage mirrors the population percentage. A ratio greater than 1 indicates an overrepresentation by a degree represented by the ratio, and a ratio less than 1 indicates an underrepresentation by a degree represented by the ratio. The graph below shows the extent to which subgroups of students exceed or fall below the ratio of 1.



*Students may count in more than one subgroup.

The graph clearly illustrates that the largest overrepresentations for student discipline are among Black, SWD, ED, and Male students. The largest underrepresentations are for Asian and Non-ED students. Further, when the data were controlled for individual demographic features, Black, ED, SWD, and Male students continue to be overrepresented in discipline (see Appendix 2). Asian and Non-ED are consistently underrepresented in discipline.

This same statistical methodology can be used to assess the impact of poverty on disciplinary consequences. The following graph compares each racial or ethnic subgroup's ED and Non-ED ratios and clearly highlights the overrepresentation of ED students in every racial and ethnic subgroup and the underrepresentation of every non-ED subgroup. The analysis highlights the significant impact that poverty has for every subgroup of students.



*Students may count in more than one subgroup.

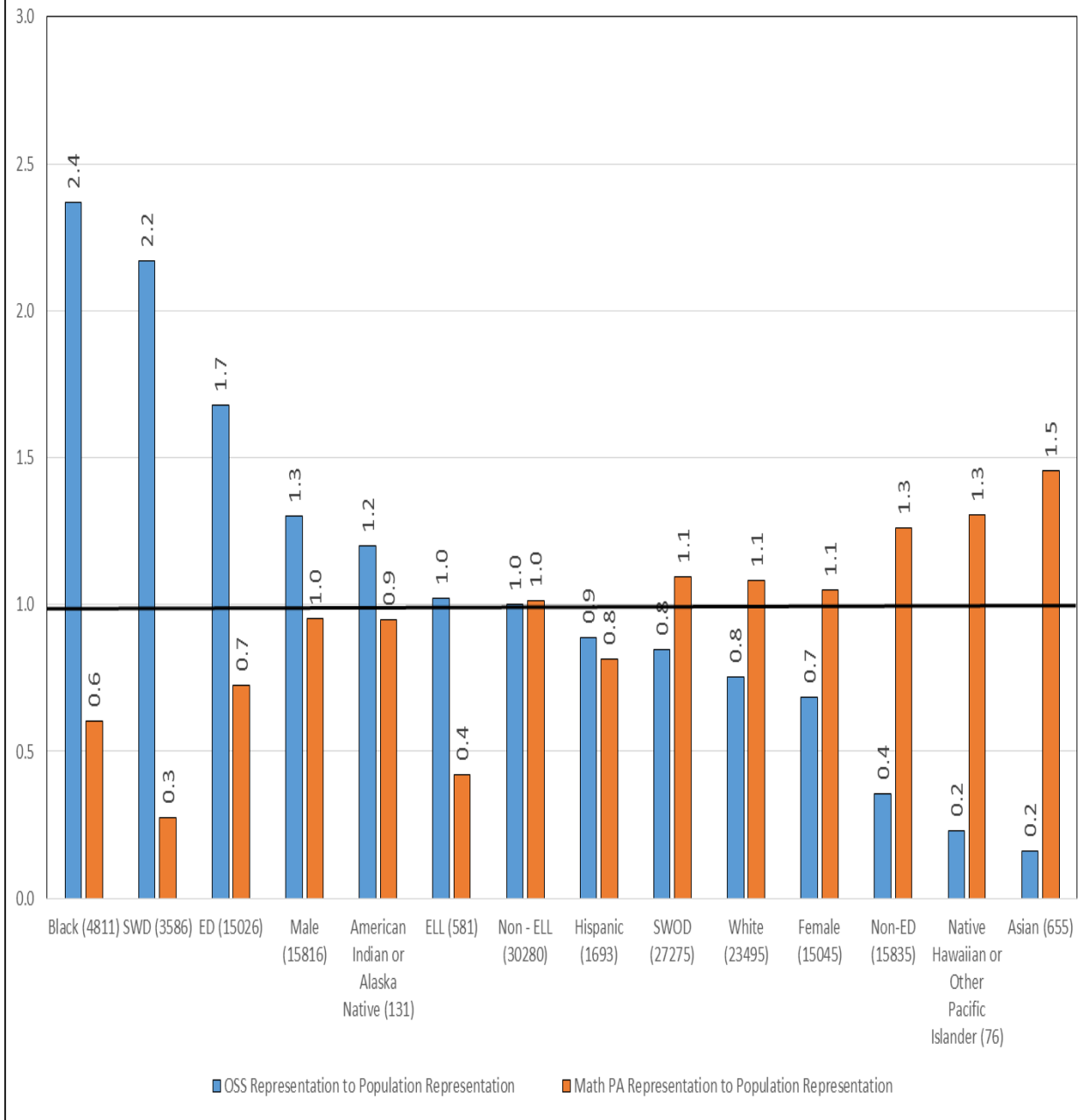
Thus, the Task Force has identified that disparities in discipline do exist for students in the Black, SWD, ED and Male subgroups, with poverty having a significant impact regardless of other defining demographic features.

ACADEMIC DATA

Student performance on state assessments was examined to determine whether disparities in academic outcomes exist in the Knox County Schools.

To assess the impact of suspension on academic outcomes, student proficiency rates in mathematics were analyzed in relation to student discipline data. It was not surprising that an inverse relationship between discipline and academic achievement existed; as suspensions increase, academic performance decreases and vice versa. The following graph illustrates this relationship.

Suspension and Proficiency Ratios MS and HS SY1415
 (Ratios Above 1 are Overrepresentations, Ratios Below 1 are Underrepresentations)



*Students may count in more than one subgroup.

Academic outcomes can also be examined based on proficiency rates among subgroups of students. The following state accountability chart for the Knox County Schools measures the size of the achievement gap that exists for the four identified subgroups in four grade and subject areas. For each subgroup, the numbers represent the size of the achievement gap (percent Proficient or Advanced). On the following table, a green number indicates the district successfully shrank the achievement gap during the 2014-15 school year; a red number indicates the achievement gap either grew or remained the same; a green check mark

indicates the district met its gap closure target goal; and a red X indicates the district did not meet its target goal.

Area	KCS Gaps SY1415			
	ELL vs. non-ELL	SWD vs. non-SWD	ED vs. non-ED	BHN vs. All Students
3-8 Aggregate Math	25.2%	41.6%	29.1%	19.6%
3-8 Aggregate Reading	37.1%	41.4%	31.3%	20.8%
HS Algebra I/II	32.2%	33.6%	24.4%	18.5%
HS English II/III	49.1%	42.2%	26.6%	19.5%

ELL = English Language Learners	ED = Economically Disadvantaged
SWD = Students with Disabilities	BHN = Black, Hispanic and Native American students
*Students may count in more than one subgroup.	

As illustrated in the table, the district made significant progress in narrowing academic achievement gaps during the 2014-15 school year (hitting 9 of 16 district targets and narrowing achievement gaps in 11 out of 16 subject/subgroups). However, the size of the achievement gaps for some subgroups of students is substantial, particularly for ELL and SWD students.

Another state accountability measure is to assess student performance by subgroup for each of the grade/subject categories. The chart below shows the percent of students for each subgroup who scored Proficient or Advanced on the state assessments (TCAP and End of Course assessments). A green number indicate an increase of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in 2014-15 versus 2013-14; a red number indicates a decrease.

Areas	Knox County Percents Proficient or Advanced 2014-2015 (Increases in Green, Declines in Red)								
	Asian	Black	Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	ED	SWD	ELL
3-8 Reading	78.9%	30.8%	78.6%	35.6%	48.5%	59.1%	34.5%	17.9%	17.8%
3-8 Math	85.6%	33.9%	82.2%	44.6%	49.5%	62.3%	39.5%	21.4%	32.9%
HS Algebra I	83.3%	51.3%		58.8%		69.1%	52.5%	34.1%	37.7%
HS Algebra II	85.7%	31.2%		48.1%		68.9%	43.8%	41.4%	
HS English II	85.4%	49.6%		57.2%		76.3%	53.1%	32.6%	
HS English III	61.4%	22.8%		34.3%		51.0%	29.7%	10.3%	
# Improved	3/6	5/6	2/2	4/6	1/2	5/6	4/6	3/6	3/3

*Students may count in more than one subgroup.

For each of the subgroups, the district met at least half of the indicators, with significant improvement overall. However, a comparison of student performance across subgroups for any grade/subject combinations reveals significant differences in achievement, ranging from only 17.8% of ELL students scoring Proficient or Advanced in grades 3-8 reading/language arts as compared to 78.9% of Asian students. It is clear that there is substantial work to be done to close persistent achievement gaps in the Knox County Schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

In order to ensure *Excellence for Every Child*, the DEO Task Force has developed a set of recommended strategies and action steps to achieve this goal.

VISION

To create and ensure a school environment where teachers can teach, students can learn and succeed and the entire community can excel.

GOALS

1. Redesign KCS discipline policies and practices of the Knox County Schools to:
 - Eliminate systemic disparities in discipline based on race, ethnicity, income, language, disability, zip code, or other categories for potential discrimination;
 - Include and emphasize Restorative Practices¹/alternatives to suspension and expulsion;
 - Incorporate Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)² in every classroom/school; and
 - Cultivate a positive environment of mutual responsibility and self-advocacy.
2. Enhance capacity of educators to provide high quality instruction and respond to classroom behavioral challenges.
3. Utilize juvenile justice system only when necessary (criminal activity).
4. Ensure academic growth and achievement for all students, particularly for those furthest behind.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

For each of the Recommended Strategies/Action Steps that follow, end of year data from 2015-16 will serve as the baseline from which to measure future progress. Specific outcomes and milestones will be developed during initial implementation in fall 2016.

TIMELINE

In order to achieve the desired outcomes and ensure *Excellence for Every Child*, the DEO Task Force acknowledges the need for immediate action, as well as strategic implementation of these Recommended Strategies/Action Steps over a five-year period.

IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure that the recommended action steps are adopted and implemented, the DEO Task Force proposes the following implementation strategies:

¹ Restorative Practices are processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing.

² Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) is a framework that can be used by any school to help improve the social and learning behaviors of students and decrease disruptions that interfere with instruction.

	Action Step	Stakeholder(s) Responsible	Timeline
1	Craft a clear implementation plan for individual strategies/action steps that include timelines, outcomes, and milestones and implement the plan as prescribed.	Primary: Identified KCS personnel, law enforcement, and community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016
2	Transition the Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force into a Steering and Oversight Committee that consists of individuals representing all key stakeholder groups to: 1) review progress, discuss issues, and refine efforts; 2) identify and include additional stakeholder perspectives and expertise to include on subcommittee working groups; 3) evaluate outcomes and ensure public accountability and transparency, and 4) regularly solicit input from the community, follow up on concerns, and communicate frequently with KCS leadership to address issues.	Primary: Superintendent Secondary: DEO Steering and Oversight Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task Force to select a Nominating Committee that will determine composition of and selection process for Steering/Oversight Committee (Summer/Fall 2016) Steering/Oversight Committee to meet every other month during 2016-2017 Quarterly meetings to occur in 2017-2021 Subcommittee meetings as needed beginning in Fall 2016
3	Create an Ombudsman role to: 1) help KCS families navigate school and community organizations and systems; 2) serve as a liaison in the implementation of the Task Force Recommendations; 3) report directly to the Superintendent, and 4) present quarterly to the Board of Education	Primary: Superintendent Secondary: DEO Steering and Oversight Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop role and job description (Fall 2016) Advertise and hire (Spring 2017)
4	Establish a comprehensive communication plan designed to share information, solicit meaningful input, and expand parent/community access to school information and services to non-English speakers.	Primary: Director of Public Relations Secondary: Director of Community Relations, DEO Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer 2016 - ongoing

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

STRATEGY 1: TRAINING

Training and staff development were key action steps identified by the Task Force in order to effectively change behavior and practices.

	Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
1.1	Require ongoing Cultural Competency training for all KCS staff (certified and classified) and provide cultural supports	Primary: Executive Director of Student Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify desired outcomes and content of training (Summer 2016)

	in order to meet identified outcomes	Secondary: Director of Professional Learning, KCS Principals and Department Heads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify vendor (Summer 2016) Initial training (2016-17) Ongoing training and support (2017-2021)
1.2	Offer ongoing professional development on effective Classroom Management Strategies and cultural competency supports	Primary: Director of Professional Learning Secondary: Executive Director of Student Support Services, KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop program (Fall 2016) Implement (2016-ongoing)
1.3	Provide ongoing professional development to support high quality, differentiated, core instruction to meet the needs of all learners (ELL, SWD, advanced, struggling, etc.)	Primary: Chief Academic Officer and Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction Secondary: Director of Professional Learning, KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued focus for systemwide inservice in 2016-17 Continued focus for collaborative planning and instructional coaching support (2016-ongoing)
1.4	Train school resource officers to effectively address situations involving students with social/emotional/mental health issues and access appropriate resources	Primary: KCS Chief of Security Secondary: Executive Director of Student Support Services, Chief of Knoxville Police, Knox County Sheriff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial training (2016-17) Follow-up and additional training (2017-ongoing)
1.5	Utilize monthly arrest/discipline reports to identify areas of need for ongoing training	Primary: KCS Chief of Security Secondary: Executive Director of Student Support Services, Chief of Knoxville Police, Knox County Sheriff, Office of Accountability, KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish quarterly reviews (2016-17) Implement training as needed (2016-ongoing)

STRATEGY 2: PROGRAMS

The Task Force identified a number of specific programs that are aligned to goals.

	Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
2.1	Implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in all KCS schools	Primary: Executive Director of Student Support Services Secondary: Supervisor of Student Support Services, KCS principals and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand from 18 schools to 30 schools in 2016-17 Expand to 50 schools in 2017-18 Expand to all elementary schools in 2018-19

		teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand to all middle and high schools by 2019-20
2.2	Expand the Community Schools initiative and develop other community partnerships to provide additional community, behavioral and mental health supports at non-Community Schools	<p>Primary: Executive Director of Student Support Services</p> <p>Secondary: Great Schools Partnership, KCS principals, community support agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand from 12 schools to 14 schools (2016-17) Double the number (24) of Community Schools by (2020-21) Expand partnerships to non-Community Schools (2016 – ongoing)
2.3	Implement “Handle with Care” program (school notification by law enforcement of traumatic incidents in order to provide appropriate student supports)	<p>Primary: Executive Director Student Support Services</p> <p>Secondary: Knoxville Police Department, Knox County Sheriff’s Office, KCS Chief of Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate program to principals (Fall 2016) Implement Fall 2016
2.4	Develop and implement a Student Advisory Council to engage students in developing solutions (solicit student input, peer mediation/jury/student council)	<p>Primary: Chief Academic Officer</p> <p>Secondary: Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, Director of Community Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with school board student representative to develop goals and objectives of Council (Fall 2016) Identify school representatives (Fall 2016) Implement (Spring 2017)
2.5	Develop and implement student mentoring program in middle and high school	<p>Primary: Director of Community Relations</p> <p>Secondary: Chief Academic Officer, Executive Director of Student Support Services, Executive Director of Secondary Schools, other community agencies offering mentoring services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop program goals and objectives (Fall 2016) Recruit and train mentors (Spring 2017) Implement program (Fall 2017)

STRATEGY 3: POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The Task Force identified a number of policies and practices that either need to be reviewed and changed or developed and implemented.

	Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
3.1	Review all KCS Discipline Policies and Procedures and propose revisions that	Primary: Executive Director of Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a working group (Summer 2016) Bring proposed

	reflect Restorative Practices and alternatives to suspension.	Support Services Secondary: Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Elementary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, KCS principals	recommendations for school board approval (Spring 2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training and communication (Spring/Summer 2017) • Implementation (2017-18)
3.2	Restructure in school suspension (ISS) to reflect Restorative Practices and provide intervention support	Primary: Executive Director of Student Support Services Secondary: Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Elementary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include this strategy with 3.1
3.3	Eliminate “conduct prejudicial to good order” as a reason for school suspension	Primary: Executive Director of Student Support Services Secondary: Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Elementary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, Office of Accountability, Office of Information Technology, KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate this work with the discipline policy and procedure work
3.4	Implement Restorative Practices in all KCS schools	Primary: Executive Director of Student Support Services Secondary: Executive Director of Elementary Schools, Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, all KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot Restorative Practices at three (3) high schools (2016-17) • Full implementation at all high schools (2017-18) • Full implementation in all middle and elementary schools (2018-19)

3.5	Define method of disaggregating, tracking and reporting discipline and academic data in grades K-12 for all schools	<p>Primary: Office of Accountability</p> <p>Secondary: Executive Director of Student Support Services, Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Elementary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, Office of Information Technology, KCS principals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop methods for tracking and reporting (2016-17) • Implement process (2017-18)
3.6	Create and communicate a Stakeholder Bill of Rights (inclusive of students, parents, teachers, and administrators)	<p>Primary: Chief Academic Officer</p> <p>Secondary: Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Elementary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, Director of Community Relations, KCS principals, KCS PTA, KCEA, and Student Advisory Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop (Fall 2016) • Implement (Spring 2017)
3.7	Partner with law enforcement to reduce juvenile arrests at school (other than criminal activity such as drugs, weapons, etc.)	<p>Primary: KCS Chief of Security</p> <p>Secondary: Knoxville Police Department, Knox County Sheriff's Office,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2016 - ongoing
3.8	Utilize "disorderly conduct" consistently in all zip codes as a last resort for student arrest.	<p>Primary: Knoxville Police Department and Knox County Sheriff's Office</p> <p>Secondary: KCS Chief of Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2016
3.9	Develop consistent tracking and monthly reporting of data by KCSO and KPD (on-campus student arrests by race, ethnicity, gender, offense, location, time of day).	<p>Primary: Knoxville Police Department and Knox County Sheriff's Office</p> <p>Secondary: Knox County Juvenile Court,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plan (Summer 2016) • Implement (Fall 2016)

		KCS Chief of Security	
3.10	Conduct a bi-monthly meeting between SRO and principal to review arrest data and develop proactive strategies to eliminate such events	Primary: KCS Chief of Security Secondary: Knoxville Police Department, Knox County Sheriff's Office, Executive Director of Secondary Schools, all KCS Secondary Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop reporting and meeting protocol (Fall 2016) • Implement process (Spring 2017)
3.11	Ensure culturally responsive classroom instruction	Primary: Chief Academic Officer Secondary: Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Director of Professional Learning, Educational Preparation Providers, KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review KCS curriculum and instructional materials to ensure that it reflects diversity in culture and perspective (2016-17) • Refine understanding of "Teacher Knowledge of Students" in the TEAM rubric (2016-17) • Model and embed culturally responsive pedagogy in PD activities (2016 – ongoing) • Collaborate with higher education partners to ensure that preservice teachers develop effective culturally responsive instructional practices (2016-ongoing) • Review policies related to adoption of textbook and instructional materials and ensure compliance (Fall 2016 – ongoing)
3.12	Provide appropriate academic opportunities (including access to AP and honors curriculum) and instructional supports (including tutoring) for all students based on individual need	Primary: Chief Academic Officer Secondary: Curriculum & Instruction Support Staff, KCS principals and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2016 - ongoing
3.13	Match each student with at least one caring adult in school	Primary: Executive Director of Secondary Schools Secondary: Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate expectations to middle and high school principals (Summer 2016)

		Director of Student Support Services, Executive Director of Elementary Schools, Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement, KCS principals and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate this as a strategy in STAR Plan/ePlan (Fall 2017)
3.14	Ensure strong family and community engagement and parent/student advocacy centered on mutual responsibility and support	<p>Primary: Director of Community Relations</p> <p>Secondary: Community Organizations (KAUL, Project GRAD, faith-based community, etc.), Student Advisory Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016 - ongoing
3.15	Provide classroom, school and district information and services in multiples languages for non-English speaking families	<p>Primary: Director of Public Relations and Supervisor of ELL/World Languages</p> <p>Secondary: Director of Community Relations, KCS principals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer 2016 – ongoing
3.16	Develop classroom resources for teachers who teach and support ELL students	<p>Primary: Supervisor of ELL/World Languages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016 - ongoing

STRATEGY 4: PERSONNEL

The Task Force recognizes the need to increase the diversity of faculty and staff in the Knox County Schools.

	Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
4.1	Enhance minority recruiting efforts	<p>Primary: KCS Chief of Human Resources</p> <p>Secondary: KCS principals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current % of minority candidates in applicant pool (Summer 2016) Develop user friendly methods to identify minority candidates (2016-17) Establish diversity targets for district and schools (Winter 2016)
4.2	Develop community promotion activities to attract/retain minority teachers	<p>Primary: Director of Community Relations</p> <p>Secondary: KCS Chief of Human Resources,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016 - ongoing

		Community Organizations (KAUL, Project GRAD, etc.)	
4.3	Establish minority professional mentoring and networking activities	Primary: Director of Community Relations Secondary: Community Organizations (KAUL, Project GRAD, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016 – ongoing
4.4	Increase the number of male teachers, particularly in elementary school	Primary: Chief Human Resources Officer Secondary: KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016 - ongoing
4.5	Ensure that struggling students (students performing below grade level standards) have access to highly effective teachers	Primary: Executive Director of Secondary Schools, Executive Director of Elementary Schools and Executive Director of Innovation and School Improvement Secondary: Human Resources, KCS principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016 - ongoing
4.6	Budget permitting, explore opportunities to increase the number of school counselors, social workers, behavior liaisons and other support personnel at all school levels	Primary: Director of Finance Secondary: Executive Director of Student Support Services, KCS Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2016 - ongoing

GLOSSARY

Accountability: responsibility and responsiveness

Best Practices: those practices that surpass others in quality and/or demonstrate evidence of impact

Cultural Competency: the ability to interact with others based on understanding, acceptance, and respect for cultural differences

Disaggregated data: to separate into component parts, or break apart for a closer look

Disparity: an important difference, an inequality, something incongruous, markedly distinct or fundamentally different

Economically-disadvantaged: based on federal income poverty guidelines and commonly measured by the number of students receiving a free or reduced price lunch

In-School Suspension (ISS): an area set aside within the school for students who must be removed from the classroom, but who may remain in school, for a period typically not to exceed three days; instructional materials, assignments, and supervision are provided

Minority: a reporting term that includes students who are not Caucasian native English speakers

Ombudsman: a government official who hears and investigates complaints by private citizens against other officials or government agencies

Out-Of-School Suspension (OSS): punishment that excludes students from school due to disciplinary infractions warranting responses greater than ISS. Based on the length of the OSS, procedures exist for notification, hearings, and appeals.

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS): a framework that can be used by any school to help improve the social and learning behaviors of students and decrease disruptions that interfere with instruction

Restorative practices: processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing.

Social-emotional learning: process through which children and adults acquire, and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions

Appendices

**RACIAL DISPARITY IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
TASKFORCE**

FINAL REPORT

Presented to Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale
Knox County, Tennessee

March 12, 2007

KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

March 13, 2006

The Honorable Michael Ragsdale
Suite 615- City County Building
400 W. Main Street
Knoxville, TN 37901

Dear Mayor Ragsdale:

In recent months, concerns have been raised in our community over the higher suspension and expulsion rates of African-American students in our Knox County Schools. The Board feels very strongly that all children should be held to a high standard of behavioral conduct regardless of race, gender, income or ethnicity. The possibility that African-American students are being treated more harshly than others is a matter of concern to all of us and calls for a thorough review and assessment.

The Board of education has asked the Superintendent to benchmark our suspension and expulsion rates and practices against other metropolitan systems in the state of Tennessee. On behalf of the Board, I am requesting that you establish a community-based task force to examine this issue, assess best practices in comparable systems, and make recommendations to the Board. The importance of this issue to all of us requires a task force comprised of a broad cross-section of concerned and impartial members of our community.

We look forward to working with this task force and welcome their analysis and recommendations. Please let me know how the Board and administration can be of assistance in this effort.

Respectfully,

Daniel P. Murphy, Ph.D.

Cc: Board of Education
Superintendent Lindsey

**RACIAL DISPARITY IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
TASK FORCE
FINAL REPORT**

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Members of the Task Force:

- Bud Gilbert, Chair- Attorney with Kennerly, Montgomery & Finley, P.C.
- Ronni Chandler, Vice Chair- Associate Director, Project Grad
- Robert (Bob) Booker- Executive Director, Beck Cultural Center
- Don Bosch - Attorney with The Bosch Law Firm
- Gloria Deathridge - Real Estate Executive
- Steve Hill - Director of Government Relations, St. Mary's Health System
- Rebecca Longmire - Librarian, Retired from Knox County Schools System
- Patricia Robledo - President, Robledo Translations, LLC
- Beth Schwartz- Rabbi, Temple Beth El
- Victor Wharton - State of Tennessee, Juvenile Justice
- Saadia Williams- Executive Director, Race Relations Center of East Tennessee

Introduction

On March 13, 2006 the Knox County Board of Education requested that the County Mayor appoint a community-based taskforce **to examine the issues of community concerns regarding higher suspension and expulsion rates of African American students, assess best practices in comparable systems, and make recommendations to the Board.** On March 31, 2006 the County Mayor announced the appointment of an 11-member Taskforce. The Taskforce began work in April 2006. Technical resources and assistance were offered by both the Superintendent's Office and the County Mayor's Office. Data for the 2004-2005 school year (the most complete data set at the time of Taskforce creation) was used.

While understanding the delicate balance between individual student rights and the overall safety of the student population, this Task Force seeks to correct inequities in school discipline, particularly those based on race.

Recommendations

At minimum, the Knox County School System should (without regard to order of importance):

All schools

1. Provide mandatory **system-wide training** with on-going support and resources available to empower educators to work effectively with a multiracial, multicultural student body (e.g., cultural competency, laws related to discrimination, undoing racism, understanding poverty, human relations, civility, etc.);
2. Create a **parent friendly brochure** on "Your Rights When Your Student is Suspended" (dubbed by the Taskforce as a Parent Miranda). Specific In-School and Out-of-School Suspension information on due process, appeal and modification deadlines, missed assignment make-up, alternative school availability and transportation should be discussed in this brochure;
3. If the **Character Counts** program is an effective tool for students, make it mandatory. Particular attention should be given to transition grades K, 5, 6, and 9;
4. Create systemic **Interventions to redirect** student behavior at the second disciplinary referral, making suspension the last resort not the first. System-wide directives for suspending students should be clear to all parties;

Senior Staff Responsibility

5. The School Board/Superintendent should require its Research and Evaluation Department to provide more specific, **user-friendly (disaggregated) data on school discipline** and report it to the School Board/Superintendent monthly. Data on suspension and expulsion should be reported annually to the community, with at least one Parent Forum in each geographic sector, scheduled annually, to provide information related to discipline and receive feedback;
6. All long-term disciplinary actions, i.e., greater than ten days, should include a **Student Reentry Plan**, prepared on a standard form to be completed by the school administrator, and signed by the student, the parent, and the principal;

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7. The School Board/Superintendent should identify the **staff members, at both the central office and individual schools, who will be accountable** for oversight of proactive strategies and tracking progress on the implementation of these recommendations;
8. The School Board should **reduce the latitude** principals have in issuing suspensions and expulsions, and provide a clear definition of the catch-all category "Conduct Prejudicial to Good Order;"
9. Cultural competency should be added to Knox County Schools **professional development standards**;
10. The formation of a **partnership** should be explored, Involving the University of Tennessee College of Social Work, University of Tennessee College of Law, U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations, and Race Relations Center of East Tennessee for support in researching, developing and implementing best practices relating to school discipline; and
11. Related Issues of intolerance, disrespect, and incivility, based on factors other than race should be addressed by **future task forces**.

Key Definitions

Accountability: *responsibility and responsiveness*

Best practices: *surpassing others in quality, desirable*

Cultural Competency: *the ability to interact with others based on understanding, acceptance and respect for cultural differences*

Disaggregated data: *to separate into component parts, break apart for a closer look (ie. By demographics)*

Disparity: *an important difference, an inequality, something incongruous, markedly distinct or fundamentally different*

In School Suspension (ISS): *an area set aside within the school for students who must be removed from the classroom, but who may remain in school. Instructional materials, assignments and supervision are provided, for a period typically not to exceed three days.*

Minority: *a reporting term that includes students who are not Caucasian native English speakers, for purposes of this report.*

Out Of School Suspension (OSS): *students are excluded from school due to disciplinary infractions warranting responses greater than ISS. Based on the length of the OSS, procedures exist for notification, hearings, and appeals. Note-OSS suspension data was reviewed by taskforce*

Parent: *includes biological and legal guardians, for purposes of this report.*

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Poverty (Free/Reduced Lunch): Eligibility based on federal income poverty guidelines, (Federal Register/Vol. 71, No. 50/Wednesday, March 15, 2006/Notices

Note-Information on FIRL for high school populations is probably under-represented due to student concern about embarrassment at that level

Key Findings

- a. African American students were over-represented in suspensions as compared to their representation in the populations of district schools, confirming disparity.
- b. An In-depth, multilevel University of Tennessee Knoxville evaluation of middle and high school data (where the majority of suspensions occurred) revealed that poverty is a more significant Indicator of disciplinary Incidents than race. Other Important findings were
 - 43% of the middle school/high school study sample received free or reduced lunch;
 - Minority students In the sample were more likely to receive free or reduced lunch, be enrolled In special education, be an English Language Learner (ELL) student, and have their last Infraction of the year coded as a violent offense; and
 - Minority students in the sample had a higher mean number of previous out-of-school and in-school suspensions and were more likely to be excluded from school following their last Infractions.
- c. Communications that are currently mandated between schools and parents are not always carried out promptly and clearly. For example, parents often do not fully understand their rights of appeal and suspension reduction; schools are Inconsistent in providing clear information and/or instructions to parents.

Additional Findings

- a. There is inconsistency across the school system in what types of conduct and student circumstances merit a 1-day, 3-day, 10-day, etc., suspension. For example, teachers interpret "tardiness" differently.
- b. The suspension category S13... "Conduct Prejudicial to Good Order" is nebulous and overused; 40% of suspensions were accounted for by infractions in this category, twice the number of the next highest categories (S01 Attendance Related-18% and S04 Fighting--18%). State law includes, but does not define, this category. Data indicates there are different tolerances for disagreeable behavior, with suspension lengths ranging from 1 or 2 days to 150 days for this category.
- c. Male students were twice as likely to be suspended out of school as female students. Of total 11, 249 infractions, 70% were male and 30% female. Males were likely to receive a more severe penalty for similar offenses. Student data is not unduplicated; there may be multiple infractions reported for a single student.
- d. Title I schools have provided leadership in the area of cultural competency through such past initiatives as Rita Pierson/Ruby Payne (A Framework for Understanding Poverty), and Principal Baruti Kafele (educating African American and Latino children).
- e. University of Tennessee, U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service, Race Relations

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Center of East Tennessee, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and numerous initiatives across the country have cultural competence resources that should be used.

- f. System-wide training for teachers and administrators on classroom management/teaching of a diverse student population has been limited. Individual buildings have often done much more. Unconscious and/or unintended biases may lead to the expectation of behaviors that will result in OSS.
- g. Student to student intolerance at school (religious, ethnicity, gender, etc.) exists, based on parent testimony and discipline notes for S13 infractions.
- h. Title 1 schools have additional classroom assistants that are not available to other schools. Classroom aides make it possible to diffuse potential infraction. Teachers without classroom aides may have a more difficult time with classroom management.
- i. Alternative education is not a mandatory requirement for all OSS students. Transportation is not provided for alternative education.

Scope of Review

In addition to scheduled meetings and review of the data provided by the Knox County Schools Central Office containing discipline files, discipline forms, policy and statute, and discipline flowchart, the Task Force:

- heard comments from:
 - Parents
 - Principal and teacher panels
 - Knox County Schools senior staff
 - U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations
 - Emerald Youth Foundation
 - UTK Law School faculty member
 - General Public, individual comments via email, and telephone, on Racial Disparity in School Discipline
- reviewed analysis of suspensions compared to State Report Card enrollment
- reviewed analysis of suspension infractions, including disaggregated data
- reviewed discipline procedures, practices
- reviewed web links to related programs and reports
- reviewed "Practices Used by Other School Districts in Addressing Racial Disparities In School Discipline" (provided by U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations)
- reviewed "Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions and Expulsions in Indiana" and "Always Teaching: Effective Alternatives to Zero Tolerance in Indiana's Schools"
- reviewed "On-Campus Intervention Program (OCIP) from Pinellas County, FL

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- reviewed "Unintended Consequences: The Impact of 'Zero Tolerance' and other Exclusionary Policies in Kentucky Schools"
- reviewed report from Tennesseans for Nonviolent School Discipline "Better, More Effective Alternatives Do Exist" (www.geocities.com/forkidsake/disciplinealt.html)
- reviewed studies provided by University of Tennessee College of Social Work:
 - “Report to the Racial Disparity in School Discipline Task Force Knox County Schools”
 - "Multilevel Evaluation of Factors Predicting School Exclusion at Knox County Schools, Summary Report"

Narrative

The Knox County School Board and County Mayor are to be applauded for appointing a Task Force to look more closely into the disproportionate number of African American student suspensions. While the data show that Knox County is not the worst offender in the state, the Board and Mayor understood that improvement must be made. If students are not in school, they are not being educated—a fundamental right of children and the fundamental role of the public school system.

Demographics of students suspended in 2004-05 (the most recent complete data set available at the time the Task Force was established) indicate there is a disparity in the number of African American students suspended in comparison to their representation in the Knox County Schools student population. The School System is commended for its cooperation as the Task Force went about its work. Additional review—disaggregating data, school profile demographics, hearing from panels of educators, public comments to the Taskforce, conducting a public forum to bring in the voices of those affected—all confirmed disparity.

The reasons for the disparity, however, were much harder to isolate. All incidents did not follow a similar pattern and are therefore open to speculation and interpretation. Discipline is not applied equably and consistently in Knox County Schools.

Approaches to discipline vary, as they should, from elementary to middle to high school. What is excused or forgiven in young children results in disciplinary action as the child moves through the grades. There is little evidence that the Knox County School system prepares students for changed expectations of behavior at higher grade levels. Task Force discussions focused on student transition grades K, 5, 6, and 9 where proactive efforts might defuse undesirable behavior and prevent out-of-school suspension.

The members of the Task Force brought a variety of perspectives and experiences regarding issues of ignorance, tolerance, and respect among students, teachers, and administrators in our schools – including race, religion, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and more. The task force explored the interactions and "ripple effects" of these issues, as they complicate matters of disparities in school discipline. While the Task Force focused on racial disparities, it became clear that there are other, related problems, especially poverty. The recommendations of the Task Force should lead to addressing these problems.

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Racism is about power, privilege and control. Race relations (human relations) are about respect and civility. Teachers and administrators should be models of tolerance and civility. They should receive the training and support they need to be competent models, and equipped to spot discrimination (e.g., students not choosing students for study groups/teams, devaluing contributions/intellect of people of color, changing behaviors in the presence of students of color, stereotyping and name calling, hurting feelings of students from low income families, etc.) Staff and students also need to be educated on both cultural diversity, as well as the laws of the country and the State regarding racial equality. Both students and staff need order, focus, and respect in the classroom. Diligent good-faith efforts are essential, along with accountability.

There is often a reluctance to talk about race-related issues. Our community is still addressing race-related issues in other areas besides education (i.e., housing and banking discrimination, economic and employment disparity). Compounding it all is the reality that race relations are often complex. Add to this a painful history around education in Knoxville: former dual-system city and county schools, U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights formal complaint, *Geier* desegregation suit affecting higher education, integration of University of Tennessee by lawsuit, decline of Knoxville College.

In the 21st Century, the demographics of students in Knox County Schools are becoming increasingly diverse. Moreover, there are increasing numbers of families in economic distress. The preparation to welcome, retain and educate these students must keep pace. Everyone should be accountable for drawing excellence from a diverse population. The ultimate goal is engaged and productive citizens. This means that school staff must be proactive, preventive and intentionally inclusive. The current School Board has sent a clear message that it is ready to address tough and sensitive issues. During the months of Task Force work, the School Board has also adopted a "Religious Expression" policy and "Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying" policy.

Valuing human beings is the highest form of diversity and multiculturalism. It is strongly recommended that the School Board focus the system on redirecting students rather than punishing them. System-wide expectations regarding student suspension should be clear. Our review of the research indicated that those who see suspension as an effective tool will use it more quickly. Teachers who put their students first, who genuinely want to be in the classroom and who are themselves invested in the success of their students are the most effective disciplinarians. Students who feel connected to school are less likely to experience emotional distress or engage in violent behavior (Dupper). Sometimes neither staff nor students can differentiate between disagreement and disrespect. On a more positive note, many staff members can manage discipline problems early on; however, most staff members are in need of cultural diversity training. Some behavior is cultural expression rather than intentional disruption.

As one of our Task Force members put it:

When you are different, and you are hungry and you may not have a coat or a book bag and when home is unsafe or unstable, it is hard to concentrate. And when you do not feel safe at school or valued or understood it is even more difficult to learn. Children who are poor, who are of color, who are different, face these hurdles and more in school. School system; from central office to custodians must see children as children first, and students second. These are the factors that should guide us in creating schools that teach children how to take responsibility, anticipate consequences, and know a range of choices. This is a proactive approach that reaches out to children, and where children are partners in their own success, and who thus become children who learn and achieve.

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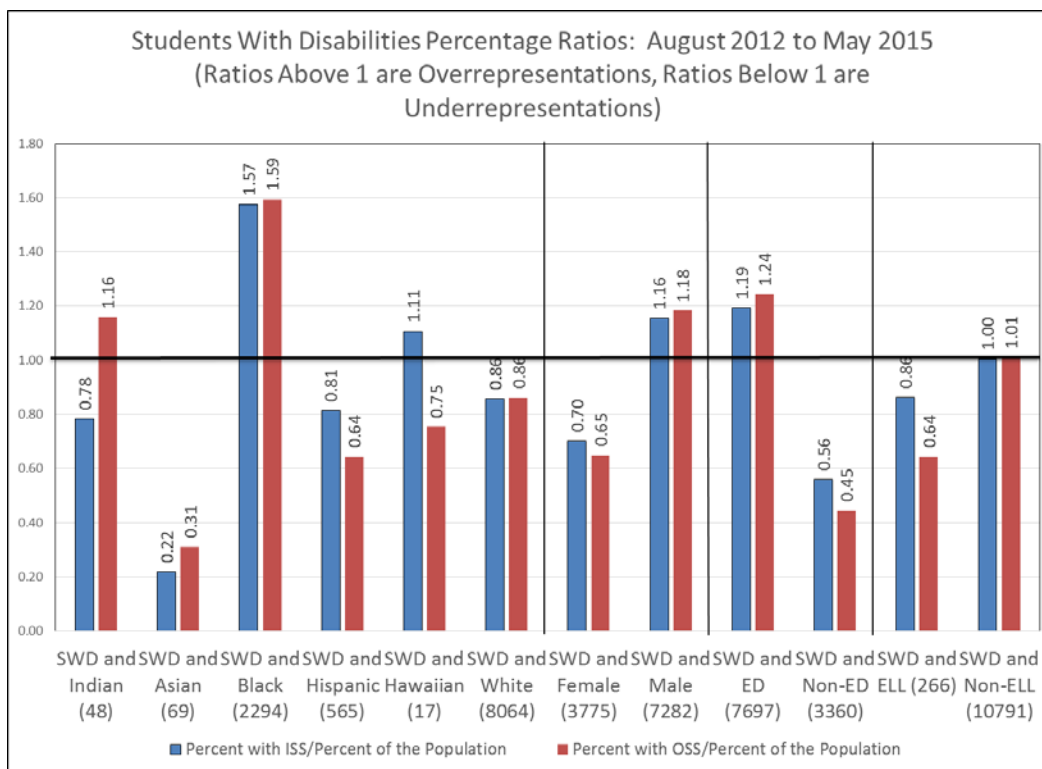
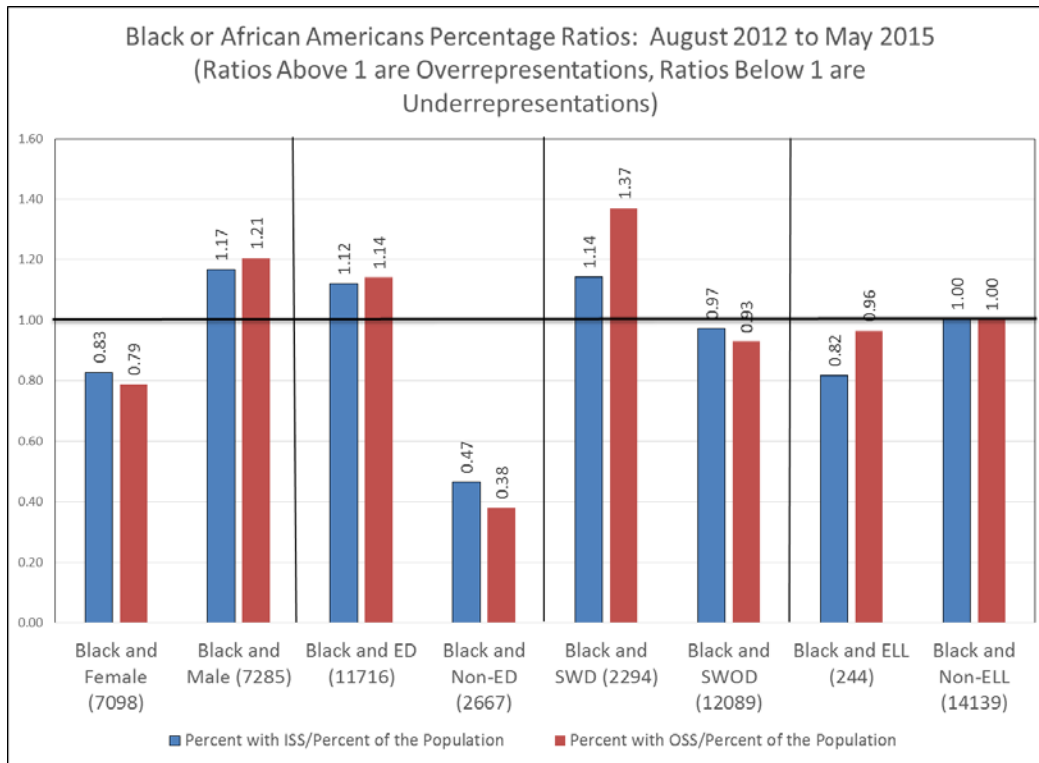
We must also continue the difficult conversations about race and ethnicity. The data on school discipline shows clear disparities based on race. The reasons that would explain it are complex and involve, among other things, historical, socioeconomic and racial (institutionalized and unconscious) factors. Attitudes, assumptions and expectations are not topics that we discuss easily or openly. We need not deny the unarticulated attitudes we bring from our own backgrounds, but we have to acknowledge them and resolve to grow beyond them. Everyone has assumptions about race and culture, their own and others. What we bring to the table is both significant, and beside the point. The appointed Task Force was itself diverse and as these differences were acknowledged during the work, it was agreed these conversations are critical for long term success in improving our school system.

Ongoing support for high quality education for the children of Knox County is needed. Examples of successful, inclusive, and proactive approaches exist in school systems near and far. They demonstrate that positive behavior is more than discipline. Parents, students, teachers, administrators and support staff are all stakeholders in our schools, as well as in our community as a whole. Each must take responsibility for the success of all our children. Change begins from the top down, whether at school or at home. Parent/guardians and other concerned adults should connect with schools early in the year and remain in contact. Personal extended classroom visits, conversations with teachers and students about challenges and successes, celebration of achievements, and active participation in PTA/volunteer opportunities are essential, from parents/guardians, administrators, school board members and other concerned adults. If the recommendations of this Task Force are understood as investments in our children and our community, then we will all reap the benefits of safer schools and smarter kids.

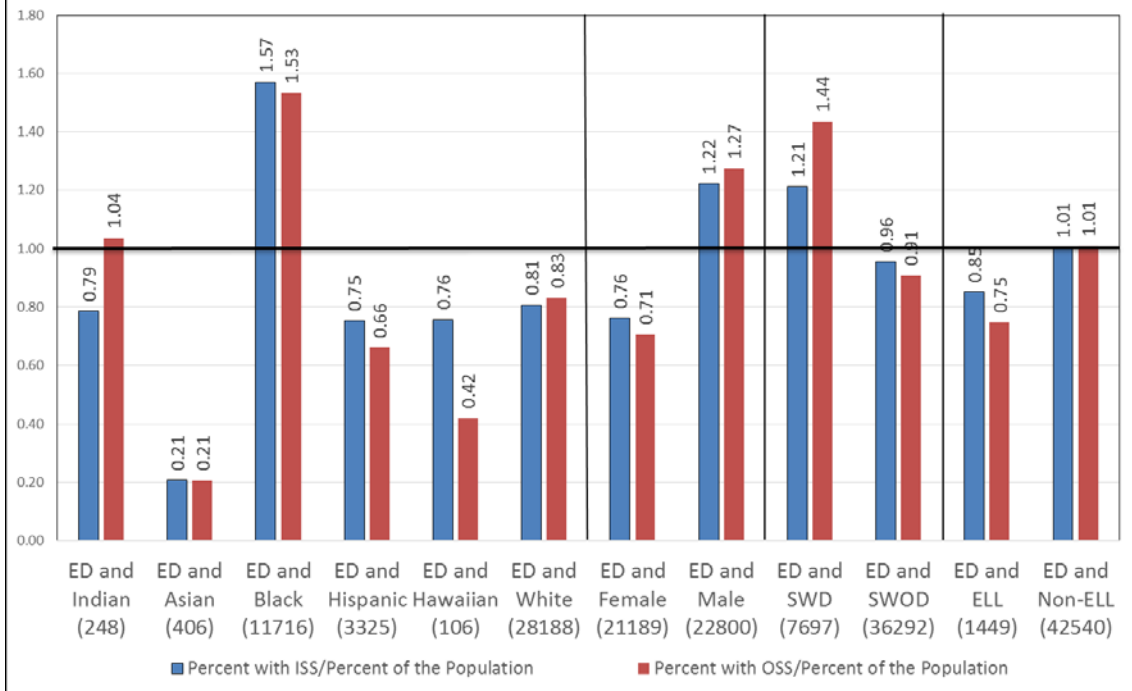
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APPENDIX 2: OVERREPRESENTED AND UNDERREPRESENTED PERCENTAGE RATIOS



Economically Disadvantaged Percentage Ratios: August 2012 to May 2015
(Ratios Above 1 are Overrepresentations, Ratios Below 1 are Underrepresentations)



Male Percentage Ratios: August 2012 to May 2015
(Ratios Above 1 are Overrepresentations, Ratios Below 1 are Underrepresentations)

